

Town of Westminster – Select Board Meeting Minutes – Monday, June 26, 2023

Members Present: Salvatore Albert Jr, Heather M. Billings, Melissa A. Banks

Staff Present: Stephanie Lahtinen, Tamie Chiarelli

Others Present: Roni Beal, Nick Langhart, Betsy Hannula, Greg Buckman, Tracy Murphy, Don Brutvan, Matt France

CALL TO ORDER

H. Billings called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM in room 205 of the Town Hall. She announced that the meeting was being recorded and broadcast live by Ashburnham/Westminster Community Media and no other recording devices have been brought to her attention.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

BASKETBALL COURTS

H. Billings made the announcement that the Town is thrilled to have the basketball courts on South Street receive so much enthusiastic usage during the nice weather. However, there has been a consistent issue with trash being left all over the court when there is a receptacle available. If this continues, The Town will be forced to lock the courts in order to prevent this from occurring further. Please clean up after yourselves so that everyone can continue to utilize these public spaces.

6/21/23 SPECIAL TOWN MEETING RESULTS SUMMARY:

H. Billings made the announcement that, first, this Board would like to thank the 274 registered voters that spent their Wednesday evening with us debating this important issue. On Wednesday June 21, a Special Town Meeting was held due to a Citizens Petition. The article read:

To see if the Town will vote to rescind, repeal and revoke the authority to demolish the property located at 3 Bacon Street (the former Town Hall) which was given to the Select Board under Article 36 of the 2020 Annual Town Meeting, and to reinstate the prior purpose of the property, which was to be conveyed subject to a historic preservation restriction, or act in relation thereto.

Based on M.G.L. c.40, §15A this vote was determined to require a 2/3 majority to pass. After much civil discourse on both sides, ultimately the vote was taken by secret ballot and was 148 in favor, 126 against; defeating the article and leaving the building and property under the care, custody and control of the Old Town Hall and property under the Select Board, without limitation.

M. France asked how long this process would take of making the decision and is there a time limit. H. Billings stated that there is no time limit to this and that they are gathering information at this stage and will discuss all options.

B. Hannula stated in length about the vote of what the people wanted with the fate of the building and faulted all of the previous Select Board members including this current board of “not doing what the majority of the people wanted” for that building and creating very confusing questions on the ballot.

M. Banks stated her position of why she is for demolishing the building and main point being that the building is extremely unsafe and would be better served as green space for the downtown area. M. Banks also stated that they did include and listen to the Community Arts/Historical group on how the ballot questions should be worded and the group did take part in the wording.

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The lengthy debate continued with M. Banks asking B. Hannula about the Historical Commissions plans for the Upton Building, which nothing has been done with for years and unfortunately will end up having the same fate as the Old Town Hall.

APPROVALS

WARRANTS:

M. Banks made a motion to approve the following warrants:

Accounts Payable	#23-52A	\$151,375.12	6/26/23
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The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

JUNE 12, 2023 MEETING MINUTES:

M. Banks made a motion to approve the minutes of June 13, 2023. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

PAYROLL AUTHORIZATIONS:

Part Time Cemetery Laborer:

S. Albert made a motion to approve the payroll change request and authorization for Jacob Banks as part time Cemetery Laborer. The motion was seconded by H. Billings and passed. M. Banks recused herself.

Community Services Director:

M. Banks made a motion to approve the payroll change request and authorization from the Town Administrator for Audra Kirtland as full time Community Service Director, as voted at the May 6, 2023 Annual Town Meeting. The motion was seconded and passed.

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT (ARPA) ANNUAL FREE CASH CLOSE OUT:

M. Banks made a motion to vote to authorize up to \$750,000 in ARPA funding to be allocated to FY2023 expenditures.

Town Accountant Julie Costello is requesting that the Board authorize the expenditure of up to \$750,000 of the towns ARPA allocation in FY2023. This will simply move \$750,000 of the ARPA funding to Free Cash in the fall, for distribution to projects or expenses determined by the Select Board. The purpose is to split ARPA funding between fiscal years without triggering the federal single audit threshold of \$750,000.

The motion was seconded and passed.

H. Billings asked if there were any comments and/or questions. There was none.

FY2024 – MUNICIPAL ROAD SAFETY GRANT APPLICATION:

M. Banks made a motion to vote to submit the enclosed grant application for \$16,268.72 to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, for the municipal Road Safety Program.

If the Police Dept is successful in receiving this grant, it will continue to fund our car seat distribution program, bike safety protocols as well as other trainings for the PD related to road safety.

The motion was seconded and passed.

H. Billings asked if there were any comments and/or questions. There was none.

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NEW BUSINESS

SUNSET ARTICLES:

M. Banks made a motion to vote to extend the following articles, scheduled to sunset through June 30, 2024. The motion was seconded and passed.

Account	Description	Balance	Vote	
001 142 003 6001 2021 0010	#10 Revaluation Consultant	25,000.00	6/20/2020	Sunset
001 171 003 6112 2021 0020	#20 Forestry Mgmt Old Turnpike Rd	1,500.00	6/20/2020	Sunset
001 199 003 6110 2021 0018	#18 Crocker Pond Tree Trimming and Pruning	1,500.00	6/20/2020	Sunset
001 210 003 6116 2021 0023	#23 Police/Fire Radio Building	23,503.11	6/20/2020	Sunset
001 300 003 6050 2021 0028	#28 Oakmont Exterior Board Replacement	749.93	6/20/2020	Sunset
001 300 003 6072 2021 0028	#28 AWRSD Truck w/Plow	1,208.79	6/20/2020	Sunset
001 300 003 6104 2021 0029	#29 WES Bldg Mgmt System	1,883.19	6/20/2020	Sunset
001 300 003 6121 2021 0028	#28 AWRSD Network Cabling Upgrade	539.72	6/20/2020	Sunset
001 300 003 6122 2021 0028	#28 Oakmont Exterior Door Thresholds	1,675.63	6/20/2020	Sunset
001 300 003 6124 2021 0028	#28 Overlook Exterior Door Thresholds	2,432.60	6/20/2020	Sunset
001 300 003 6125 2021 0029	#29 West Elem Exterior Door Thresholds	378.40	6/20/2020	Sunset
001 300 003 6128 2021 0029	#29 Meetinghouse Exterior Door Thresholds	7,500.00	6/20/2020	Sunset
001 300 003 6130 2021 0002	#2 WES Rooftop Heating Unit	1,300.00	11/17/2020	Sunset
001 491 003 6107 2021 0014	#14 Cemetery Confined Space Safety Equip	4,000.00	6/20/2020	Sunset

PARKS & RECREATION DISCLOSURE – J. GRONDELL:

M. Banks made a motion to vote and accept the disclosure filed by J. Grondell of a financial interest relating to the Parks & Recreation Committee and determined that the financial interest is not too substantial as to be likely to effect the integrity of her services to the Town.

Ms Grondell is filing this with the Board as the Committee retained her services to customize game boards for the summer recreation program, in the amount of \$250.00. The motion was seconded and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

S. Albert made a motion to adjourn; the motion was seconded and passed.

Meeting adjourned at 5:49 PM



Salvatore Albert, Clerk
(Prepared by T. Chiarelli)

EXHIBITS:

- Town Administrator's Report
- Warrant (1)
- June 12, 2023 Meeting Minutes
- Payroll Authorizations (2)
- Municipal Road Safety Grant Application
- Sunset Articles list
- Disclosure Form – J. Grondell